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ACQUISITION OF CUBA.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. MILES TAYLOR, OF LA.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEB'Y 10, 1859.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. TAYLOR, of Louisiana, said :

Mr. CHAIRMAN : It is not my habit to speak on subjects not directly before the House for its action. But, as there is a subject of great public importance, which will, in all likelihood, be before it for decision during the closing days of the session, under such circumstances that it may be impossible for me to get an opportunity to speak upon it, I shall avail myself of the one which now presents itself, and will proceed to give expression to my views upon that subject at this time.

The subject to which I allude is the acquisition of the Island of Cuba by the United States. To that subject the public attention has been long directed; and with every succeeding year since the idea of making the acquisition first took possession of the popular mind, it has continued to grow in popular favor. The geographical position of the island is such that it seems to be marked out by nature to become, at no distant day, a part of the Union. It lies contiguous to our territory, from which it is separated only by a narrow strait, and at a great distance from the country with which it is now politically connected as a mere colonial dependence.

But it is not its geographical proximity alone which indicates the propriety of its being taken into the confederacy of American States. That island lies within the tropics, whilst the whole of our present territory is within the temperate zone. Its productions are almost entirely different from ours. We grow or manufacture nearly everything the island stands in need of; and on the other hand we require everything with which her climate or soil is capable of rewarding the hand of labor, for the consumption of our own people. Under such circumstances, it is evident to all that the interests of the United States and of Cuba would be advanced in the most extraordinary manner if the relations between them were of such character that their people could make those interchanges of their different commodities, in obedience to the great laws of trade, and without being trammelled in their operation

by those commercial restrictions which almost necessarily grow out of the various conflicting interests of the different members of the great family of nations. But this was not so. The commercial regulations adopted by Spain with reference to Cuba, have always and at all times been designed to secure to the mother country all the benefits which it was possible for her to derive from that possession, and to exclude all other nations, as far as practicable, from any share in them. This system operated more harshly and more injuriously upon the United States than on any other country; and it is, therefore, not to be wondered at that the advantages likely to accrue to the nation from the possession of Cuba should have been a frequent subject of speculation among our citizens at a very early period in our political history.

But, sir, whilst a feeling of this kind was everywhere prevalent amongst us, and our distinguished statesmen had again and again declared that the acquisition of the island was every way desirable, yet we never forgot what was due to other nations, or to ourselves, under the influence of that settled conviction; and the position which the United States has taken and steadily maintained, has been worthy of herself, and in perfect accordance with the principles on which our Government is based. At various periods while there were contentions amongst the great Powers of Europe; while there were disturbances in the relations of the great States, it has been thought at different times that there might be a change in the situation of Cuba; that she might be transferred by the chances of war, or by the political necessities of the times, from the dominion of Spain to that of some other Power. When anything occurred which, in any degree, indicated the possibility of such a result, it has always been the habit of American statesmen to consider what position the United States ought to occupy in the event of the happening of such a contingency.

The settled policy of our people is peace. Our institutions are purely republican. They have their foundations on the principle that is the right of every political community to govern itself; and it is inconsistent with their spirit that we should make acquisitions of territory by force. We cannot hold a colonial dependency. We cannot dominate over a subject-people. We cannot acquire and retain territory occupied by any distinct portion of the human family, any separate and organized political community, without making that community part and parcel of ourselves. Whatever political societies may be from time to time united with us in the future, so long as our existing institutions are maintained in their purity, must be united with us as brethren. They must be associated with us as equals. Therefore, as it would have been entirely at war with the principles of our Government that we should ever propose to make permanent acquisitions of territory by force, that we should seek to have another community added to that formed by our people against its consent, the position of the United States was always in accordance with her principles. She said, "we have no desire to disturb the existing relations between the Island of Cuba and the parent State. Let that relation exist forever, if Spain and Cuba both desire it. But," she added, "if, in the contentions of the world, a contingency should arise which might lead to the sever-

ance of that island from the mother country, then the United States owe it to themselves to declare to the world that they will not permit it to pass under the dominion of any other Power." And why was this declaration made? Was it made in the lust of territorial acquisition? No, sir. It was made in the interest of Spain, and to deter those European States which coveted her remaining possessions in this hemisphere from taking them, at any time, with the strong hand. And this attitude, which was just to the world, just to Spain, and just to ourselves, we have maintained from the time it was taken to the present day. Nor do I understand that there is any intention of abandoning it now.

It is true, Mr. Chairman, that the President has, in his late annual message, suggested to Congress the propriety of attempting, at this time, to procure a cession of Cuba from Spain to the United States. Is this suggestion indicative of a desire on his part to abandon that attitude? to adopt a new line of policy towards Spain, conceived in a different spirit? I cannot believe it. Such an attempt would not be in itself inconsistent with the future maintenance of the position we have hitherto occupied with respect to the acquisition of Cuba by any other Power, or with the existence of the most friendly feelings on the part of the United States towards the Spanish nation. Indeed, to my apprehension, a proposal made with a view to procure its voluntary transfer to the United States by Spain for a full equivalent, would imply, on our part, a strong desire to maintain those relations of amity and kindness which have so long existed between the two countries, and to place them beyond the chances of any future rupture.

It is known to all that various events have transpired in the Island of Cuba, or in its waters, within the last few years, which have occasionally given rise to a good deal of irritation in the two countries; and which, at times, even seemed calculated to disturb the good understanding between them. Now, sir, the President's attention has been necessarily directed to these causes of national disquietude, and it is to a desire of obviating them in the future that the recommendation contained in his message must, in fairness, be attributed.

But, whatever may have been the motive which induced the President to bring this subject before Congress at this time, I am sure that the suggestions made by him will not be entertained here in the aggressive spirit imputed to us by the leading presses of Europe; and that any proposition which we may determine to make to Spain with respect to it, will be made under the influence of those feelings of respectful regard for her which should characterize the conduct of the United States towards a nation which was one of those which came to their assistance when they took up arms for the purpose of achieving their independence.

The object of the President in speaking on the subject in his message, was to have the Congress of the United States take some definite action with a view to obtain a peaceful transfer of Cuba from Spain to the United States, at an early day, if it be at all practicable to do so in the present position of the civilized world, and in consequence of his having so spoken, the attention of both Houses of Congress has been given

to it during the present session. The committees of both Houses have reported in favor of making an attempt at this time for the immediate acquisition of Cuba, and have accompanied their respective reports with bills which are designed to give effect to this policy. These bills are substantially the same, and I shall therefore call attention only to that reported to the House, and which will be before us for consideration in a few days. That bill is in the following words :

Be it enacted, &c., That the sum of \$30,000,000 be, and the same is hereby, appropriated, out of any moneys not otherwise appropriated, to enable the President to conclude with the Government of Spain a treaty of amity, and for the settlement of all differences, including the cession of the Island of Cuba, to be used by him, if he shall think fit, in advance of its ratification by the Senate : *Provided,* That said treaty, when signed by the authorized agents of the two Governments, and duly ratified by the Government of Spain, shall call for the expenditure of the sum or any part thereof ; full and accurate accounts of which expenditure shall be by him transmitted to Congress at as early a day as practicable.

From this, it will be seen that the committee propose to make provision, by a legislative act, for the appropriation of \$30,000,000, to be placed at the disposal of the President of the United States, and which he shall be authorized to make use of in the event of there being a treaty entered into with Spain for the cession of Cuba, after that treaty has been ratified by Spain, and without waiting for the action of the American Congress ; and that it makes no other provision whatever with reference to the contemplated acquisition, but leaves everything connected with it to the sole discretion of the President, or to that of the Senate, or to the future action of Congress.

Now, sir, I am in favor of the speedy acquisition of the Island of Cuba. I am in favor of that acquisition, because I know, if it become a part of our territory, that it will be of immense advantage to the whole nation ; that it will give a new impulse to our industry, extend our trade, and give rise to new relations with all the various countries of Europe with which it is desirable to remain upon the footing of friendship. But, sir, while that is my feeling, I am not in favor of proceeding in this way. I think the scheme involved in it incomplete. I think the proposition, if it should be adopted, is not of a character at all likely to lead to the attainment of the object aimed at with any certainty.

What is the proposition ? Why, it, in effect, authorizes the President to open negotiations with Spain for the cession of Cuba, and places a certain sum—\$30,000,000—at his disposal, to be disbursed by him after the ratification of the treaty on the part of Spain, and in advance of its ratification by the Senate. Would such a provision as this insure the acquisition of the island, if the President were to negotiate a treaty and use the money intrusted to his discretion ? The views of the President, with respect to the sum which might with propriety be given as a consideration for that island, might differ widely from those of Congress. A treaty might be entered into with Spain, under his instructions, which would stipulate for the payment of a sum vastly greater than the people of the United States would be willing to give.

Under these circumstances, as a matter of course, the acquisition would not be made, because the treaty would be rejected by the Senate, or be repudiated by the people.

But this proposed plan of proceeding is liable to another and still greater objection. It makes no provision whatever with respect to the future position of the island, or of its people, in the event of their transfer from the dominion of Spain to that of the United States. Is the island to remain a dependency of the United States and the Government, as a Territory, or is it to be erected into a State? Are the people of the island to be left to regulate their local affairs according to their own views, and according to their own good will and pleasure, or are they to be subjected to interference from without, and be liable to have their present social organization disturbed, and their domestic institutions changed, in obedience to the will of others, and in opposition to their wishes, and to the injury or destruction of those rights of property which they now enjoy under the authority of Spain?

These are questions of momentous importance. • We are all aware of the difficulties to which their settlement, from time to time, gives rise in the United States, whenever they are in any way connected with the existence of the right of property in slaves, or with the preservation or continuance of that system of labor. The Island of Cuba is only valuable to the world because it swells all the streams of trade with a great variety and a vast amount of those commodities which are the peculiar growth of the tropical regions of the earth; and it is known to all that its capacity to do this, in a manner and to an extent at all commensurate with the daily increasing wants of civilized life, depends altogether upon the employment of slave labor there. Her present commercial importance is inseparably connected with that species of labor. Without it she would soon lose her proud pre-eminence among the great producing countries of the tropics; and if it were once disturbed or interfered with, in violation of the rights of those who now employ and direct it there, it requires no extraordinary foresight to perceive that, after passing through all the various stages of decay and demoralization which have been exhibited to the world of late years, in the downward progress of the West India colonies of England and France, under the operation of the same causes, she would at last sink into the state of barbarism and degradation which has caused her neighbor, the once flourishing and prosperous Hayti, to forfeit her former place on the rolls of civilization, and to become a mere blank or a foul blot on the earth's surface.

It is clear to my mind, Mr. Chairman, that the Island of Cuba would be of no value to us, if its present system of labor were to be disturbed, and its capacity to supply our own markets and the markets of the world with tropical productions were to be destroyed. Without this capacity, her acquisition by the United States would not be a national advantage. It would neither add to the materials of our trade nor lead to an increase in our shipping; nor would it give new life to our present agricultural and manufacturing industry by opening a more extended market to their products. Unless the island can be transferred to our possession in its present condition, and with the certainty that the rights of its people

to regulate their domestic institutions will be preserved inviolate, it would neither be useful to the United States, nor just to the people of the island, to make the acquisition. And, for one, I have no hesitation in saying that, in my opinion, no measure looking to the acquisition of Cuba deserves support which does not make full provision on that subject.

But these are not the only objections which present themselves to my mind against the bill reported by the committee. That bill proposes, without any real necessity, to put \$30,000,000 at the disposition of the President, to be used by him, at his discretion, in bringing about the cession of the island. It is true, that the bill provides that he shall use this money only in case the treaty for the cession, when made, "shall call for the expenditure of the same," &c. For what is it to be used? To what purpose is it to be applied? Is it intended to form a part of the consideration to be given for the island? Or is it to be expended in some collateral way, to facilitate the making of such a treaty? I have the greatest confidence in the integrity of the present Chief Magistrate of the nation. I have no fear that he would misapply the fund placed at his disposal, or that he would employ it in any unworthy manner to promote the success of the projected negotiations. But, sir, I hold it to be wrong in principle, to vest any unnecessary discretion in the Executive, at any time, or for any purpose. There can be no necessity for leaving him any discretion in this case, with respect to the payment of money. If it is the intention of Congress to appropriate the sum specified in it to the payment of a part of the consideration to be given for the island, the bill ought to say so. But, in that event, the simple and proper way of accomplishing that object would be to direct the payment of the money appropriated directly to Spain. If that be all that is aimed at, why not say so? And then there will be no necessity for vesting any discretion whatever in relation to the disbursement of the money appropriated in any officer whatever.

In my view, these various objections to the bill before the House are insuperable. When Congress acts at all, with reference to the peaceful acquisition of Cuba, it seems to me that its action ought to be complete in itself; that it should be of such a character that, if it were met by Spain in the same spirit, it would necessarily result, not only in the absolute acquisition of the territory, without leaving anything to be done in the future to give it effect, but would also fix and determine the position which the island and its people were to occupy in our political system, after their transfer to the United States. In the hope of contributing, in some way, to the adoption of such a measure, I had the honor, a few days since, of asking leave of the House to introduce a bill embodying the various provisions which seemed to me essential for the carrying out of the policy of which I have spoken. Objection was made at that time, and I was prevented from submitting those provisions to the consideration of the House. It is, however, my intention, when the subject comes up before the House, to offer the bill which I then sought to introduce, as a substitute for the one reported by the committee; and with the view of securing to it a favorable reception at that time, I shall now proceed to lay it before the House,

and to show the propriety of adopting it, if we are really desirous of obtaining possession of the Island of Cuba, and of securing to the country all of the advantages which ought to flow from such an acquisition.

But before doing this, it seems to me proper that I should say something as to the position which I occupy with respect to the policy of acquiring Cuba. I said that I am in favor of acquiring that island at once; and have already spoken of the great advantages which would result to the United States from making the acquisition. But, Mr. Chairman, the committee who reported the bill of which I have been speaking, whilst they describe, in the warmest terms, the extraordinary manner in which the interests of the nation, as a whole, will be advanced by the acquisition of Cuba, more than intimate in their report that the success of the measure would be very injurious to the sugar-growers of Louisiana; and, indeed, if I remember right, they urge its adoption on the House on the very ground that if it be carried out, it will have the effect of permanently lowering the price of the great staple of that State, in the culture of which their fortunes are now embarked. And some of the members who have addressed the House with reference to this measure, have also taken the same ground, and have advocated the acquisition of Cuba for the special reason that it will necessarily give the people of the United States their supply of sugar free of any duty.

Now, sir, I come from that very portion of the United States which it is intimated, or asserted, is to be injured and not benefited by this policy of acquisition. I am the Representative of the greatest sugar producing district in the United States, perhaps in the world. Those engaged in its culture, certainly derive an advantage, a very important advantage, from the duty imposed on the sugar imported into the United States from Cuba. If Cuba should become a portion of the United States, those engaged in that culture would necessarily be deprived at once, and forever, of that advantage; for the barriers opposed by our revenue laws to the free importation of sugar from that island, would be removed, and the same free trade which now exists between the several States of the Union would be established between Cuba and ourselves. And yet, sir, I am in favor of this policy of acquisition.

I do not believe that there is within the limits of this nation a constituency more patriotic, more disinterested, or more willing to submit to all of those personal sacrifices which a portion of the people are sometimes required to make for the good of the whole, than that which I have now the honor to represent on this floor. But, sir, while this is true, while I have the most profound conviction that my constituents would not hesitate, though it might prove injurious to themselves, to give their full consent to the acquisition of Cuba if the good of the whole Union demanded it at their hands, I must still confess that I should not presume to take such a step, to make such a sacrifice in their behalf as would be necessarily involved in the advocacy and support of any measure which I believed would be injurious to them, until I had first submitted the question to them for consideration, and had been authorized to do so by their positive instructions, given with that very view. After this expression of what I consider to be the duty of the

Representative to his constituents, is it necessary for me to say that I am settled in the belief that Louisiana will constitute no exception to the rest of the United States, so far as it relates to the benefits to be derived from the proposed acquisition?

No, sir; instead of being an injury to Louisiana, the acquisition of Cuba will be a permanent benefit to all her citizens, and to none more than to those whose fortunes are now embarked in the sugar culture. It is true, sir, that the first effect of that acquisition might be to depress the price of their great staple; but if that were so, how long would the depression continue? Why, sir, notwithstanding the extravagant expectations of many of those who look forward with hope to such a result, under the operation of the known laws of trade, a depression of price from this cause would not continue during a single crop. And then, I would ask what would be the subsequent effects of the proposed measure when once carried into successful operation.

The only really great and insurmountable advantage which Cuba now possesses over Louisiana, in the prosecution of the sugar culture, grows out of the unlimited supply of cheaper labor which she has hitherto derived, and still continues to derive, from the illicit prosecution of the African slave trade, and from that other open and legalized traffic in the yellow races of Asia which has been established and carried on in our day, by other nations, under the auspices and example of philanthropic England. Deprived of that advantage, we of Louisiana can successfully compete with her in the markets of the world for the supply of sugar. Annex Cuba to the United States, Mr. Chairman, and this illicit and secret trade and that legal and open traffic will both be at an end, so far as Cuba is concerned; and in a short, very short, time, the cost of production in the two countries will be equalized. If annexation gives to Cuba a better market for her sugar, by enabling her to sell it to the consumers among our people free of any duty, it will at the same time, deprive her of the advantages which she has hitherto enjoyed over us in the shape of cheaper labor and cheaper land; so that the relative positions of Cuba and Louisiana, with respects to the profits to be derived from the production of that commodity, will not be materially disturbed for any considerable length of time.

These considerations, I think, make it clear that the present interest of the Louisiana sugar planters would not suffer very materially from the immediate effect of the annexation of Cuba. But it is not to the present alone, that we are to look. The statesman should cast his eyes also towards the future when he is determining upon his course with regard to a measure which must, from its very nature, produce effects that are to be felt through a long series of years. It would be easy for me to show, Mr. Chairman, from acknowledged, and indisputable facts, that the future interests of the class to which I have referred, would be advanced in the highest degree, and placed upon the most solid foundation, by the adoption of the very measure, which many, who have not fully considered the subject, have thought was full of menace and danger to them. But, sir, I forbear; because it is no part of my present object to prosecute such a discussion. My only desire at this time is to promote, as far as it is in my power to do so, by

word or deed, the success of the great measure to which the attention of the House will soon be directed in the ordinary prosecution of its business; and I will therefore now return to the consideration of the provisions of the bill to which I have already referred, and which it is my intention to offer at the proper time, as a substitute for the bill before the House from the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The bill which I design offering as a substitute for that of the committee, is in the following words :

A bill to provide for the acquisition of the Island of Cuba by negotiation, and for its being incorporated into the Union in the event of its being so acquired.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President be, and he is hereby, authorized and empowered, when in his judgment it is advisable so to do, to open negotiations for the cession of the Island of Cuba from Spain to the United States; and that he be, and he is hereby, further authorized and empowered to bind the United States for the payment to Spain of a sum, not to exceed \$120,000,000, as a consideration for such cession, when the same shall have been made and completed by a treaty signed by the properly accredited and duly authorized agents of the two Governments, and ratified by Spain.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That upon the ratification by Spain of a treaty for the cession of the said Island of Cuba from Spain to the United States, made and completed as aforesaid, the President be, and he is hereby, authorized and empowered, immediately thereafter, to cause bonds of the United States to be issued for the payment of said sum of \$120,000,000, or so much thereof as may be required, and to deliver the same to the properly accredited and duly authorized agent of Spain; which said bonds shall be divided into not less than six installments, and be payable in not more than thirty years, and shall bear an interest not to exceed five per centum per annum, payable half yearly at the Treasury Department of the United States.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the said Island of Cuba, if the same is at any time ceded to the United States, may be erected into a new State, to be called the State of Cuba, with a republican form of government, to be adopted by the people of the said island, by their delegates, duly elected by the suffrages of the white males, over the age of twenty-one years, resident in the island and citizens thereof, in convention assembled, with the consent of Congress, and that the said new State, so erected as aforesaid, shall be admitted into the Union, by virtue of this act, with four Representatives until the next apportionment of representation on an equal footing with the existing States.

Upon an examination of this bill, it will be found that if it should be enacted into a law, it will constitute, in point of fact, a formal, distinct, and complete proposition made by the sovereign authority of the United States to Spain, for the cession of the Island of Cuba to the United States, upon terms which it is deemed would be advantageous to both nations.

The first section of the bill would fix the sum which the United States are willing to give to Spain as a consideration, and authorizes the President to bind the Government for its payment when Spain agrees to make the cession.

The second section provides for the issuing of the bonds of the United States for the amount to be paid to Spain, as a consideration for the cession, and for their delivery over to Spain as soon as she has actually ceded the island to the United States.

And, finally, the third section authorizes the erection of the island

into a State, in the event of its being ceded to the United States, with a Republican constitution, to be adopted by the white male citizens of the island, over the age of twenty-one years, and declares that, the State, when so erected, shall be admitted into the Union without any further action of Congress, upon a footing of equality with the existing States.

If it be our design to make any attempt for the acquisition of Cuba, it seems to me eminently proper for us to begin by the passage of such a bill as the one I intend to submit to the House. Such an act would be right in itself, because by its adoption the people of the United States, through their representatives in both branches of Congress, would determine beforehand upon the consideration they were willing to give for the cession of the territory they proposed to acquire, and would leave nothing to be done to give effect to the cession, when once agreed to by Spain on the terms proposed in the act, which was in any degree dependent on the discretion of any executive officer, or on the subsequent action of Congress.

But, Mr. Chairman, I will go further than this. I believe that the passage of the proposed bill would be followed, at no distant day, by the relinquishment of Cuba to the United States. I know, sir, that it is believed by many to be inopportune, at this time, to make any proposition on this subject to Spain. I will not pretend to say what would have been my judgment, if I had been called upon to determine whether the subject should be agitated now. But the subject has been agitated. It has been brought to the notice of the American Congress; and, if we refuse to act, it will be a declaration to the world that we do not desire to acquire the island.

But, sir, I do not consider the time unpropitious for the attainment of the object in view, if we proceed in the right direction and in the proper spirit. Nations, like natural persons, are under the dominion of their interests. And whilst there is, at all times, a sort of indefinable aversion to the alienation of ancient possessions, it is nevertheless true that political communities, as well as individuals, rarely hesitate to part with them, when it is to their interest to do so. In modern times, there have been many instances of such cessions of territory, and the history of Spain, itself, presents two of the same kind within the last century.

It is well known to us all that Cuba has long since ceased to be a valuable possession to Spain. To retain the island under her dominion, she is compelled to maintain a large military force there, and to keep a fleet constantly in its waters. The various expenses entailed upon her by these necessities, it is probable, exceed the revenues which she is able to derive from the island; so that the continuance of her authority over it may be a burden to her finances instead of an advantage.

But, in addition to this, from the very nature of things, her possession of the island must, for the future, be holden by a precarious tenure. In the event of any great political convulsion in Europe, it would, in all probability, be lost to her. If a general war should break out there, it is scarcely conceivable how she would be able to retain it. Does not the present position of affairs in Europe denote a rapidly approaching

crisis? Is it not the political mind upon the continent full of apprehension, perhaps alarm, at the idea of an impending war? Well, sir, if this apprehension should prove to be well founded, what would be the position of Spain? Will not France and England be on opposite sides in the event of such a war? And would not Spain, then, be allied with France, both from necessity and choice? If this were the case—as it most surely would be—then tell me, would Spain be able to protect the island? No, sir. It would be at the mercy of that haughty Power which has so long arrogated to herself the dominion of the seas, and which now possesses the mightiest navy the world has ever seen.

When I look to the present value of the island to Spain, and to the various contingencies of a rapidly approaching future, it seems to me that it would be the part of prudence in Spain to cede it to the United States for a fair consideration. Owing to the geographical position of Cuba, no country would derive as great advantages from its possession as the United States; and for that very reason we can afford to give a far higher consideration for it than any other Power. Under such circumstances, I can see no possible impropriety in our making known to Spain our strong desire to make this acquisition, and telling her, as an inducement to her to gratify that desire, what consideration we are willing to give her for the island, and what privileges we design to confer on its people if she should consent to transfer the island into our possession.

Such a proceeding on our part, when viewed in its proper light, can give no just cause of offence to Spain. The proposition which it involves, if made at all, will be made in a friendly spirit. We believe that the agreement, or contract, or treaty, whichever you please to call it—for a treaty is nothing more or less than a contract or agreement between nations—that we desire to make with Spain in relation to the cession of Cuba, would be advantageous to both countries. It will be made on that presumption from one sovereign to another. If the inducements held out by us to Spain are sufficient, she will assent to our proposal and cede the island to us; but if, on the other hand, she sees fit to decline it, she most certainly will be at liberty to do so without giving any ground of complaint to the United States.

Our previous conduct to Spain has made it manifest to her and to the world that we have no wish to acquire Cuba without her consent. The President has so declared in his message bringing the subject to our notice. And this fact would be necessarily implied in the very making of a proposition by which we formally ask her to cede the island to us, and offer to pay her an immense sum of money as an inducement to do so. And how, then, I would ask, is it possible that the making of such a proposition, on our part, should be misconstrued by Spain at this time? I cannot believe it, sir. I am persuaded that the making of the proposition which I have suggested can give rise to no misconstruction. But whether I am right in this or not, of one thing I feel perfectly certain: if we desire to obtain Cuba by negotiation, we must act now. And, sir, if we do act, as we propose, I, for one, shall entertain some hope for a favorable result, notwithstanding the excited ex-

pression to which the subject gave rise, very recently, in the Spanish Cortes, when the probability of some offer being made with reference to it became a subject of discussion among its members.

When a specific arrangement is once proposed which will be manifestly advantageous to the party to whom it is made, I see no reason to despair of its being acceded to. And now let me ask, what would be the necessary consequence of our making the proposition I have spoken of to Spain, in the form of a public legislative act? Would it have the effect merely to excite to declamatory displays on the part of frothy politicians and aspiring patriots? No, sir. It would attract and receive the attention, the earnest attention, of the whole Spanish people. And what would be the effect it would be likely to produce on the public mind, when it came to be fully understood in all its bearings? Can any one doubt that it would be favorable, and be likely to lead, sooner or later, to such a change in the position of the "gem of the Antilles," that, from being a mere colonial appendage to a distant Power, it would become a new sister in our republican household, and add still another star to that glorious blazonry which glitters in our political firmament?

Now, Mr. Chairman, let us turn our eyes to Spain, and see how she would be likely to be affected by the proposition I have spoken of.

I have already said that Cuba was not a source of revenue to Spain, and that it had become, and promised to continue, a burden on her finances. It is also well known to all, that its possession adds nothing whatever to her military strength, but, on the contrary, diminishes it to a very great extent, by compelling the employment of a considerable portion of her army and navy at a great distance from her shores, for its preservation and defense. As Spain is situated, it seems quite certain, then, that she derives no advantages from the possession of the island for the masses of her people, but such as may result to them from the trade which they carry on with it.

Now, it so happens that such advantages are precisely those which do not always depend on the political union of countries. There may be portions of her people, it is true, who now enjoy peculiar advantages from the operation of various commercial restrictions imposed on the intercourse of Cuba with other countries, for their benefit, of which they would be deprived by its transfer to the United States, but, if this were the case, it by no means follows that the transfer of the island to us would be injurious commercially to Spain. The experience of the past has shown, again and again, that the commercial intercourse with colonies after their separation from the mother country is almost always more beneficial to the mother country than it had been before, because of their being freed from the trammels thrown around them in their colonial condition. This was eminently so in the case of the United States after their separation from Great Britain. And we are familiar with the fact, that the conviction on that point has become so strong in England that the policy of breaking the bonds which now unite her with the Canadas has of late found strong advocates among her most eminent statesmen.

These various considerations, Mr. Chairman, constrain me to believe that Spain, in transferring Cuba to the United States, would lose noth-

ing by the transfer which it is either very desirable or very important for her to preserve by retaining it. But how would it be with what we should propose to give her in exchange for it, if this bill should pass? Would she not gain something of the highest, the very highest, importance to her if she were to accept our proposition? Why, sir, Spain is one of the very finest countries in Europe. She has a fruitful soil, and a delicious climate; her coasts abound in harbors, and her mountains in minerals; her population is numerous, frugal, and industrious. And yet she has lagged behind, in our day, in the race of improvement among the nations.

And why is this? Why, sir, Spain is a country of elevated plains and sharp mountain ridges. She has no great navigable rivers, opening easy channels of communication from her coasts to the interior. She has no facilities for making canals. What she needs are railroads to traverse her plains, to penetrate into the recesses of her mountains, so that her people may be awakened to life and progress in their sequestered abodes, and started in the career of improvement, by new demands upon them for the fruits of their industry, and new opportunities presented to them for supplying their wants. To have these roads she must have money. And this proposition, if accepted, would give her the money she requires. If Spain were to receive the sum mentioned in my bill, in exchange for Cuba, what would she not be able to accomplish with it, if it were prudently administered? Why, sir, its possession would enable her to make all those public works which are now necessary for the development of her great resources; and the acceptance of this very proposition might lead to a revival of the old glories of the Castilian name; to the restoration of Spain to her ancient rank among the foremost nations of the world. And can it be believed, Mr. Chairman, for a moment, that all this, and more, would not present itself to the minds of intelligent and patriotic Spaniards, if such a proposition were made, and make them urgent for its acceptance?

And how it would be with respect to Cuba? Would not its transfer to the United States, on the terms proposed, be followed by an immediate and extraordinary rise in the value of property there? And would not every person interested in that property have a direct pecuniary interest in bringing about the transfer? But this is not all. Such a proposition as that I speak of, which makes ample provision for the security of their existing rights of property and secures their immediate admission into the Union, would be regarded with favor by the entire population of the island. If it were acceded to, and they were placed under the protection of the "stars and stripes," they would no longer be the inhabitants of a dependent colony, ruled over by officials from abroad—mere subjects, shut out from all participation in the public concerns affecting their own interests; men whose only duty it was to yield a silent obedience, to bow in patient submission to the behests of those set over them by others. They would become an independent and free people. They would constitute a sovereign State, placed upon a footing of the most perfect equality with the other sovereign States of this great Confederacy. From being subjects, bound to obey, they would be elevated at once into citizens, vested with all

the rights of self-government. They would be at liberty to engage in all of those pursuits which lead to distinction among men. Public life would be open to them. They could take part in the management of their local affairs; fill the places created for the transaction of their local business. They would be eligible to seats in their State Legislature; and seats upon this floor, and in the Hall at the other end of the Capitol, would be open to them. In a word, sir, instead of being excluded from all public stations of honor or trust, the high offices in all the departments of the Government of a great nation would be placed within their reach, and might become the proper objects of an honorable ambition to all.

The plan submitted by the committees of the Senate and House for consideration will not answer. To proceed on that plan, in my judgment, would be entirely useless, if we contemplate a peaceful acquisition of Cuba. If it should be adopted, it gives no assurance to the people of the island as to the future. Their rights of property and their position under the authority of the United States would be left subject to all the hazards of subsequent congressional action. This circumstance alone would, in itself, constitute a very serious obstacle to the success of any negotiation, by filling the minds of the people to be affected by the transfer with apprehensions on these subjects, and arraying them in opposition to it. Neither would it place anything before the people of Spain of such a character as to make them certain that we were willing to give them a full equivalent for the island; or which would be calculated to break down the natural aversion which all nations entertain with regard to alienation of territory by creating an opposite desire for some great and clearly appreciable advantage which would result from such an alienation.

The bills from the two committees would do very well, beyond all doubt, if the only object were to display an extraordinary amount of confidence in the Executive. They would do very well if they were merely intended to make political capital, or to get up a cry to be rung out in our party contests. But, I repeat it, Mr. Chairman, congressional action of the kind which they propose, would not, in my view, be likely to lead to the attainment of the object aimed at with any certainty. It is our object to make a serious attempt to acquire Cuba by negotiation, we must proceed in the way I propose. It is the only one, I fully believe, which, as statesmen, we ought to adopt, whether we look to the success of the projected negotiation, or to the peace and quiet of our own country after its success.

I do not mean to say that we shall succeed, if we pass the bill I propose. I only say that, in my judgment, it would offer a reasonable prospect of success if we should pass it. But let us suppose, for a moment, that we do pass it, and that the proposition which it embodies is made to Spain, and rejected: well, what then? Why, sir, the act will stand upon our statute-book a perpetual monument to the world of the spirit in which alone the American people desire to make acquisitions of territory. Much has been said in monarchical Europe of the aggressive policy of the United States. Their subsidized presses rail about it to operate upon the uninformed masses, and excite a prejudice against the American name and against republican institutions. But

there is no foundation for the reproach. It is disproved by the history of all our past territorial acquisitions.

How was it in the case of Louisiana? Why, sir, we held a vast region of country lying on the upper Mississippi and all its eastern tributaries. The lower portion of that river flowed through a country belonging to another Power. We claimed a right to the free navigation of the Mississippi river under the law of nations; but that right was denied us, to the great injury of our people. We had the power to vindicate our right, and wrest the territory through which it flowed from its unjust possessor. But did we do so? No, sir. we acquired it by treaty for a valuable consideration. When it passed into the hands of France, and that Power found that it could not retain it because of the maritime ascendancy of England, she was disposed to part with it, and we bought it from her for its full value to her at that day.

And again, sir, with respect to Florida. The possession of that country was important to us, as a nation. Whilst it was held by Spain it was a source of injury to us, when we were engaged in war with England or in hostilities with various Indian tribes, because it afforded our enemies facilities for attacking us, or gave them shelter after their discomfiture in the field. In consequence of various annoyances of this sort, we took military possession of the country three several times. But did we retain possession of it by force? No, sir. When the occasions which compelled us to occupy it passed away, we withdrew our forces at once, and it came under our dominion at last only when Spain found it to her interest to cede it away.

And how was it with Mexico? We had possession of its capital; we controlled its destinies, from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific ocean. Yet our only desire was to compel our enemy to sue for peace. When there was a disposition to treat, when there was a disposition to abandon hostilities against the United States, we made a treaty and withdrew our forces. We did not imitate the monarchs of Europe, or follow the example of those States of the Old World, which have taken possession of almost entire quarters of the globe by violence. It is true, we acquired a portion of her territory which was convenient to us, by the treaty of peace; but she ceded this territory to us voluntarily, and received for it a consideration which was satisfactory to her, and had the effect of relieving her people from various pecuniary embarrassments under which they had labored for years, or which grew out of that war, which was one of their own making.

No, sir; the United States, during their whole existence as a nation, have never yet violated the rights of another nation, or acquired one single foot of territory without the full consent of its former possessors and without giving to them a full equivalent for it. The acquisition of territory on any other principle than this would be directly at war with the spirit of our free institutions; subversive of the principles on which our public policy towards other States has been hitherto based. I know, Mr. Chairman, that many who looked forward to the acquisition of Cuba, do not hesitate to say that it is necessary to our security as a nation, and that therefore we have a right to take it by force, if Spain should refuse to yield it to our demands. For one, sir, I do not assent to any such position; nor can I conceive, for a single moment

that it can be seriously countenanced by any people, unless they have deliberately made up their minds to return again to—

“That simple rule—that good old plan,
That they may take who have the power,
And they may keep who can.”

I neither acknowledge the principle, nor admit the fact on which that assumption is founded. It is undoubtedly true that our earlier statesmen looked to the possession of Cuba with anxiety, as a means of increasing our national strength. But it was never pretended that we had the right to seize it, on this ground, in utter disregard of the rights of Spain. In the earlier days of the Republic, beyond all question, the possession of this island would have been important to us in a mere military point of view. We were then in our infancy. The nation was in its swaddling-clothes, and exposed to injury from every attack. But, how is to-day? Though we have not yet attained our full growth, our giant proportions fill a continent, and our strength has become such that we may laugh all enemies to scorn. There is no longer any reason why we should have fears of foreign Powers, for the world in arms is not strong enough to move us one jot or tittle from the path which we are called on to pursue under the promptings of right and honor. No, sir; it is not to increase our national strength, or to give us security in the future, that we should desire the acquisition of Cuba. It is to advance the interests of our people in peace. And it is because I am persuaded it will have that effect, that I am now in favor of making a proposition, by the direct action of Congress, with a view to obtaining a cession of the island from Spain to the United States, on terms equally advantageous to both countries, and which should be, at the same time, not only just to Spain, but worthy of a great Republic.